REMARKS

Claims 23-44 remain pending. Favorable reconsideration is respectfully requested.

Applicants would like to thank Examiner Boykin for indicating that the claims are allowable.

The rejection of the claims under 35 U.S.C. §112, first paragraph, is respectfully traversed. The claimed subject matter is described in the application as originally filed.

The Examiner states that the "newly added claims appear to be new matter since applicants have not clearly set forth where in the specification such as claims find support." To assist the Examiner, the text of the pending claims is reproduced below. The text includes braces (i.e., {}) with citations to the specification to where support the claimed features is located. The citations are listed in italics.

23. A method of desolvating a polymer solution {*see line 1 of original Claim 1*}, comprising:

(a) steam stripping solvent from a polymer solution in an upstream desolvation tank {*see lines 2-3 of original Claim 1*};

(b) steam stripping solvent from the polymer solution in a downstream desolvation tank {*see lines 3 and 4 of original Claim 1*}

wherein

the upstream desolvation tank has a liquid phase portion and a gas phase portion {*see lines 5-6 of original Claim 1; see also Figure 6 elements 11, 111, and 112; and the specification at page 9, first full paragraph*},

downstream desolvation tank has a liquid phase portion and a gas phase portion {*see lines 4-5 of original Claim 1; see also Figure 6 elements 12, 121 and 122, and the specification at page 9, first full paragraph*},

the liquid phase portion of the upstream desolvation tank and the gas phase portion of the downstream desolvation tank are connected by a pipe {*see lines 4-6 of original Claim 1; see also paragraph [0012] at page 11 of the specification*}, and

at least one opening-degree adjusting mean is fixed to the pipe {*see line 7 of original Claim 11; see also paragraph [0012] at page 11 of the specification*}; and

(c) controlling pressures such that a pressure difference (ΔP=P2-P1) between pressure (P2) of the gas phase portion of the downstream desolvation tank and pressure (P1) of the gas phase portion of the upstream desolvation tank is larger by from 0.005 to 0.6 MPa than a pressure difference (ΔP0=P20-P10) between pressure (P20) of the gas phase portion of the downstream desolvation tank and a pressure (P10) of the gas phase portion of the upstream desolvation tank when the opening-degree adjusting mean is fully opened {*see lines 8-16 of original Claim 1; see also paragraph [0014] bridging pages 11 and 12 of the specification*}.

24. The method of Claim 23, wherein the pressure of the gas phase portion of the downstream desolvation tank is in the range from 0.02 to 1 MPaG {*see original Claim 2*}.

25. The method of Claim 24, wherein the temperature of the liquid phase portion of the downstream desolvation tank is in the range from 100°C to 200°C {*see original Claim 3*}.

26. The method of Claim 25, wherein the solvent comprises at least one member selected from the group consisting of cyclohexane, cyclopentane, cycloheptane, toluene, benzene, xylene, n-hexane, n-pentane, isopentane, n-heptane, n-octane, n-decane and dichloromethane {*see original Claim 4*}.

27. The method of Claim 26, wherein the polymer contained in the polymer solution is butadiene rubber, isoprene rubber, styrene-butadiene rubber, styrene·isoprene rubber, ethylene·α-olefin copolymer rubber, ethylene·α-olefin·non-conjugated diene copolymer rubber, butyl rubber, styrene·butadiene·styrene block copolymer, hydrogenated styrene·butadiene·styrene block copolymer, butadiene resin or acrylic resin {*see original Claim 5*}.

28. The method of Claim 23, wherein the temperature of the liquid phase portion of the downstream desolvation tank is in the range from 100°C to 200°C {*see original Claim 6*}.

29. The method of Claim 23, wherein the opening-degree adjusting mean is a pressure adjusting valve or an orifice plate {*see original Claim 7*}.

30. The method of Claim 23, wherein the concentration of the solvent remaining in a solvent-containing polymer to be loaded in the downstream desolvation tank is 10% by mass or less {*see original Claim 8*}.

31. The method of Claim 23, wherein the polymer solution is continuously supplied and polymer contained in the polymer solution is continuously recovered {*see original Claim 9*}.

32. The method of Claim 23, wherein the polymer contained in the polymer solution is butadiene rubber, isoprene rubber, styrene-butadiene rubber, styrene·isoprene rubber, ethylene·α-olefin copolymer rubber, ethylene·α-olefin·non-conjugated diene copolymer

rubber, butyl rubber, styrene·butadiene·styrene block copolymer, hydrogenated styrene·butadiene·styrene block copolymer, butadiene resin or acrylic resin {*see original Claim 10*}.

33. The method of Claim 23, wherein the solvent is at least one member selected from the group consisting of cyclohexane, cyclopentane, cycloheptane, toluene, benzene, xylene, n-hexane, n-pentane, isopentane, n-heptane, n-octane, n-decane and dichloromethane {*see original Claim 11*}.

34. A method of desolvating a polymer solution {*see line 1 of original Claim 12*}, comprising:

(a) steam stripping solvent from a polymer solution in an upstream desolvation tank {*see line 3 of original Claim 12*};

(b) steam stripping solvent from the polymer solution in a downstream desolvation tank {*see lines 3-4 of original Claim 12*}

wherein

the upstream desolvation tank has a liquid phase portion and a gas phase portion {*see lines 5-6 of original Claim 12; see also Figure 6 elements 11, 111, and 112; and the specification at page 9, first full paragraph*},

downstream desolvation tank has a liquid phase portion and a gas phase portion {*see lines 4-5 of original Claim 12; see also Figure 6 elements 12, 121 and 122, and the specification at page 9, first full paragraph*},

the liquid phase portion of the upstream desolvation tank and the gas phase portion of the downstream desolvation tank are connected by a pipe {*see lines 4-6 or original Claim 12; see also paragraph [0012] at page 11 of the specification*}, and

at least one opening-degree adjusting mean is fixed to the pipe {*see lines 6-7 of original Claim 12; see also paragraph [0012] at page 11 of the specification*}; and

(c) controlling pressures such that a pressure difference ($\Delta P=P2-P1$) between pressure (P2) of the gas phase portion of the downstream desolvation tank and pressure (P1) of the gas phase portion of the upstream desolvation tank is 0.036 MPa or larger {*see lines 8-12 of original Claim 12; see also paragraph [0015] at pages 12-13 of the specification*}.

35. The method of Claim 34, wherein the pressure of the gas phase portion of the downstream desolvation tank is in the range from 0.02 to 1 MPaG {*see original Claim 13*}.

36. The method of Claim 35, wherein the temperature of the liquid phase portion of the downstream desolvation tank is in the range from 100°C to 200°C {*see original Claim 14*}.

37. The method of Claim 36, wherein the solvent is at least one member selected from the group consisting of cyclohexane, cyclopentane, cycloheptane, toluene, benzene, xylene, n-hexane, n-pentane, isopentane, n-heptane, n-octane, n-decane and dichloromethane {*see original Claim 15*}.

38. The method of Claim 37, wherein the polymer contained in the polymer solution is butadiene rubber, isoprene rubber, styrene-butadiene rubber, styrene·isoprene rubber, ethylene·α-olefin copolymer rubber, ethylene·α-olefin·non-conjugated diene copolymer rubber, butyl rubber, styrene·butadiene·styrene block copolymer, hydrogenated

styrene·butadiene·styrene block copolymer, butadiene resin or acrylic resin {*see original Claim 16*}.

39. The method of Claim 34, wherein the temperature of the liquid phase portion of the downstream desolvation tank is in the range from 100°C to 200°C {*see original Claim 17*}.

40. The method of Claim 34, wherein the opening-degree adjusting mean is a pressure adjusting valve or an orifice plate {*see original Claim 18*}.

41. The method of Claim 34, wherein the concentration of the solvent remaining in a solvent-containing polymer to be loaded in the downstream desolvation tank is 10% by mass or less {*see original Claim 19*}.

42. The method of Claim 34, wherein the polymer solution is continuously supplied and polymer contained in the polymer solution is continuously recovered {*see original Claim 20*}.

43. The method of Claim 34, wherein polymer contained in said polymer solution is butadiene rubber, isoprene rubber, styrene-butadiene rubber, styrene·isoprene rubber, ethylene·α-olefin copolymer rubber, ethylene·α-olefin·non-conjugated diene copolymer rubber, butyl rubber, styrene·butadiene·styrene block copolymer, hydrogenated styrene·butadiene·styrene block copolymer, butadiene resin or acrylic resin {*see original Claim 21*}.

44. The method of Claim 34, wherein the solvent is at least one member selected from the group consisting of cyclohexane, cyclopentane, cycloheptane, toluene, benzene, xylene, n-hexane, n-pentane, isopentane, n-heptane, n-octane, n-decane and dichloromethane {*see original Claim 22*}.

In view of the foregoing, the claimed subject matter is described in the specification. Withdrawal of this ground of rejection is respectfully requested.

Applicants submit that the present application is in condition for allowance. Early notice to this effect is earnestly solicited.

Respectfully submitted,

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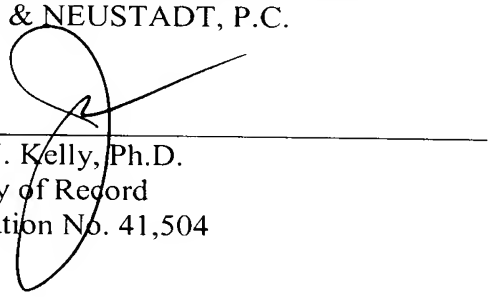
MAIER & NEUSTADT, P.C.



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